



This Saturday let the games begin!

The Summer Olympics in Beijing in 2007 will capture the world's attention in just over another year, but Aruba looks to the beginning of the Betico Croes School Olympics beginning this Saturday for sports excitement over the next two weeks. During a press conference at the National Library, Dochi Lee, representing the Minister of Sport, Ramon Lee announced the beginning of the memorial games that celebrates their five-year anniversary.

Accompanied by Hubert Kock and Endy Croes, the Director and President of the Lotto pa Deporte of Aruba, Mr. Lee outlined the schedule of the next two weeks of activities, and in particular, thanked the many sponsors that make this event possible. Present on behalf of the two major sponsors were Greg Tromp, Assistant Managing Director of the CMB Bank, and Dave Smith, community liaison for Valero Refinery Aruba. Joining these two institutions are nearly thirty other businesses that have helped to provide the uniforms and other necessities for this event that involves forty-five schools from around the island and over two thousand students from the kindergarten level through high school.

The CMB Bank has also donated the 10,000 Arubian florin prize that will go to the school of the first place winning team in the soccer competition for boys ages nine through twelve. SETAR, N.V., Aruba's telecommunications company, is providing the 5,000 florins award for the overall winner amongst the grammar school level competitors, and Lotto pa Deporte is providing all the other cash awards that are given to each school of winning overall competitors. This includes a 1,000 florin prize to the winning kindergarten and a 1,000 florin prize to the winning team from the higher level school category, which includes middle schools and up. Each individual first place team in the different sport disciplines will earn 500 florins for their school. Youngsters will compete in the sports of kickball, soccer, swimming, basketball, softball with mixed genders, running and gymnastics. Individual winners will receive gold, silver and bronze medals, and team members in the first, second, and third place teams will all receive trophies.

During Wednesday's press conference artist and teacher Stan Kuiperi informed the public of an art campaign conducted throughout the grammar schools of Aruba to involve all students in the Olympic Program. This is part of an international effort of the International Child Art Foundation and included participation of three million six graders from around the world. In conjunction with the Aruba Arts Foundation a program encouraged hundreds of students to submit their works depicting various sports, and the painting of twelve year old Maria Fernanda Aguirre Broca was chosen to represent Aruba in Washington D.C. where all the submitted art works from around the world are on display for the next year. All the pieces by Aruban students will be on display in the exposition room of the Cas di Cultura from Monday, June 5 through Saturday June 10. This year is the first that Aruba has been seriously involved in this program with an island wide effort, and Stan Kuiperi deems it a great success.

The opening ceremonies of the Betico Croes School Olympics will take place this Saturday at the Guillermo Trinidad Stadium in Dakota at 5:00 P.M. The games will continue after school over the coming two weeks in various stadiums and fields around the island such as the Filipeto B. Tromp sport center in Noord and the Grand Winkel Field in Paradara from 3:00 P.M. to 6:00 P.M. daily. Exact events, times and which teams are competing can be ascertained by following the local newspapers.

The yearly Betico Croes Olympics is an event that encourages school spirit, an interest in healthy pastimes and achievement, and above all, good sportsmanship. The growing success of this event, now in its fifth year is a chance for all students to compete, their level of athletic ability notwithstanding, and to enjoy the camaraderie of sport and the triumph of victory.